

**ON
TRACK
OFF
ROAD**







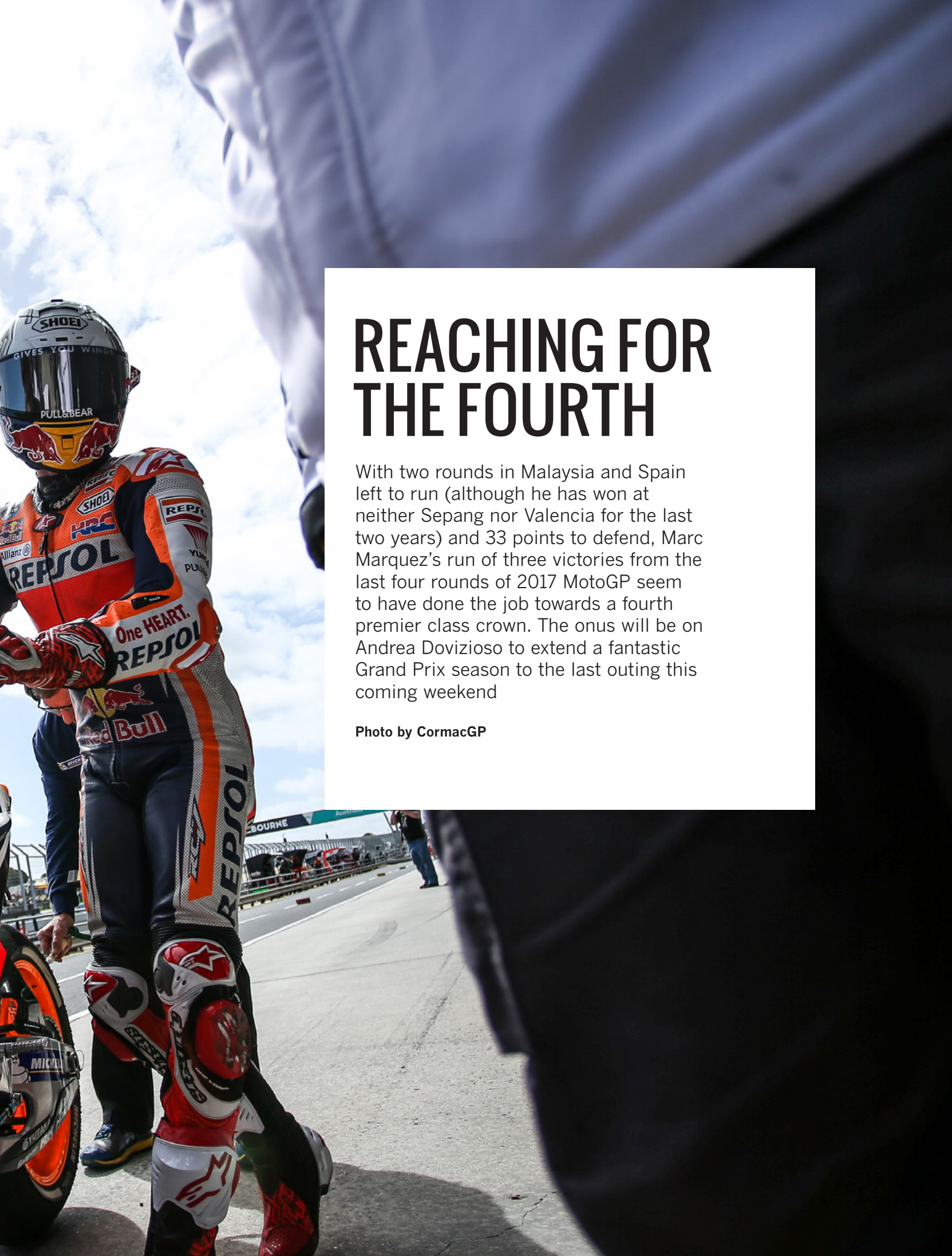
The Racecraft "Eclipse"



www.ride100percent.com
[@ride100percent](https://twitter.com/ride100percent)

20
18





REACHING FOR THE FOURTH

With two rounds in Malaysia and Spain left to run (although he has won at neither Sepang nor Valencia for the last two years) and 33 points to defend, Marc Márquez's run of three victories from the last four rounds of 2017 MotoGP seem to have done the job towards a fourth premier class crown. The onus will be on Andrea Dovizioso to extend a fantastic Grand Prix season to the last outing this coming weekend

Photo by CormacGP



MONSTER
ENERGY



MONSTER
ENERGY





MAKES YOU GREEN

Wow. A million dollars for an evening's work. In 2011 Ryan Villopoto won everything: 450SX, MX and the Motocross of Nations and raised his pension pot significantly in Las Vegas (of all places) in the inaugural Monster Energy Cup. Six years later and Marvin Musquin claimed all three Main Events in Las Vegas for the biggest payday in motorcycle racing.

Photo by Taku Nagami



THE LAST STEP

Steve Ramon at Lierop and the final round of a dramatic 2007 MX1 (now 'MXGP') FIM World Championship. This was the last time that Suzuki claimed a world title and also the last occasion that a Belgian lifted the premier class crown. Ten years on and Suzuki will disappear from the MXGP map in a move that has not been coherently explained and is such a drastic reverse from what seemed a bright new era under the stewardship of Stefan Everts. Will the yellow be back sooner rather than later and when will the full story out?

Photo by Ray Archer





STILL A HOLESHOT?

MXGP stars throwing a leg over expensive road race equipment is nothing new but Tony Cairoli learnt some of the tricks of Valencia with a MotoGP machine that very few have tried. The Sicilian jetted to Spain directly after his wedding in a busy off-season period that shows no sign of slowing (he hosts his celebration party in Sicily this weekend and then heads to EICMA soon after). Braking and acceleration of the RC16 were the most impressive elements of the tarmac orange weapon for #222. Very few rivals have seen that stare through MX goggles...

Photo by Stefano Taglioni/KTM







SUN SHINING ON THE RIGHTEOUS?

Photo by GeeBee Images



“With the position we now have in the championship I went in over my head - but it was fun to ride like this,” so said triple world champ Jonathan Rea; obviously feeling the liberating effects of having done his job for KRT and able to push to a first double win at Jerez for the penultimate round of 2017.

GeeBee Images captured the 30 year old chatting in the evening sun with mechanic Uri Pallares. With Rea’s sheer weight of achievement and rack of numbers, not to mention an MBE amongst other awards, surely a window of recognition like the BBC Sports Personality shortlist is a cert?

LEATT
THE SCIENCE OF THRILL

**GEAR UP FOR THE
THRILL**



NEW LIGHTER
AND BREATHABLE
CONSTRUCTION

SUPER VENTED
X-FLOW MESH

EXCELLENT WET
AND DRY GRIP

GPX MOTO GEAR

Leatt's pursuit of rider safety starts at layer one. With gear that's tougher, more durable, featuring stitched-in tech that takes all the knocks and bounces back every time. New level ventilation. Improved absorption. Leatt gear is First Line Protection that redefines the aesthetics of the Thrill.



MICHELIN AUSTRALIAN GRAND PRIX

PHILLIP ISLAND • OCTOBER 22nd • Rnd 16 of 18

MotoGP winner: Marc Marquez, Honda

Moto2 winner: Miguel Oliveira, KTM

Moto3 winner: Joan Mir, Honda (world champion)

By Neil Morrison

Photos by CormacGP/Sienna Wades

HAPPY HAVOC



MotoGP AUS





IN THE WAKE OF A MOTOGP CLASSIC, HERE ARE THREE OF THE BIG TALKING POINTS FROM YET ANOTHER MEMORABLE AUSTRALIAN GRAND PRIX.

1. **'THIS IS THE GAME. IF YOU DON'T WANT TO PLAY, YOU STAY AT HOME.'**

There was a delicious scheduling of events on Sunday, with the running of MotoGP several hours ahead of the crucial Formula1 bow in Texas putting the two series, and how they are officiated, in direct contrast.

Phillip Island has a habit of throwing up showdowns that live long in the memory, but even by recent standards this was a cracker; eight riders on three different makes of bike

using each and every opportunity to pounce, scrap, and fight. Three quarters of the way in and eighth placed Alex Rins was just 1.2s back of first. Early leader Jack Miller called it right, comparing this to a Moto3 freight train, whereby the leading group almost traded places by the corner.

New names – Jack Miller, Alex Rins (as well as one – Andrea Iannone – that has been absent from such scraps) added real spice to proceedings.

And the moves were fierce throughout, with Johann Zarco a constant thorn in the side of the front-runners. His lunge around Maverick Viñales' outside at turn one was arguably the most breathtaking moment of a race that only settled into a rhythm in the final five laps.

And even more striking than eventual winner Marc Márquez's composure and control, runner-up Valentino Rossi's overnight renaissance, or Zarco's aggression, was the lack of complaints issued thereafter.



Miller, Zarco and Cal Crutchlow spoke at length on their enjoyment of the scrap. "A great battle, a great show, and good fun," Crutchlow called it. "There was always touching, but no problem," an ecstatic Iannone added. "This is normal in close battles."

Each of the podium men had good reason to feel at least partly aggrieved by the incessant infighting. Marquez had so nearly come undone at turn four by a fierce Zarco lunge. Rossi fell victim to a cheeky Marquez bite at turn two. And Viñales was perhaps luckiest of all, avoiding a Zarco-Iannone double salvo that pushed him wide – and ultimately out of victory contention – at the Southern Loop.

Yet no angry words were exchanged with Rossi putting it best when the dust had settled: "It's like this, especially in the last period," he said. "The level of aggression and contact during the race is raised a lot, especially when the young riders arrive from Moto2. Also Zarco is very, very aggressive. You get angry but it don't change nothing [sic]. This is the game. If you want to play, [it] is like this. [It] is a bit more dangerous, but this is the way. If not, you have to stay at home. I enjoy very much. [It] Was a great, great race."

All of which served as a backdrop to the events in Austin, where Max Verstappen was stripped of third place, the race stewards judging his late, daring move on Kimi Räikkönen to be

in breach of rules that appear from the outside as perniciously policed.

Weighing up the two series for sheer thrills, there can only be one winner. But that's nothing new. Pondering where this version of the Australian Grand Prix ranks among previous Phillip Island vintages from 1989, '90, '99, 2000, '01, '03, '04 and '15 is more worthy of one's time. As is where this - achieved at such a crucial stage of the title race - ranks among Marc Marquez's 35 premier class victories? With Sunday's events still fresh in the mind, surely on both counts somewhere towards the very top.

2. DOVIZIOSO'S TITLE BID IN TATTERS AFTER DISASTROUS DUCATI DAY

The signs were there in February. Andrea Dovizioso wore a pained expression. Jorge Lorenzo's shoulders were slumped in the garage. After a winter talking up intentions to cure the Desmosedici's turning woes, the Phillip Island test proved conclusively that Gigi Dall'Igna and his technical team had failed to do so. Those fast changes of direction through turns one and two, seven and eight, ten and eleven were no more easier on this year's bike than last's.

"We improve a little bit," Dovizioso said in February, "but unfortunately we didn't touch the turning."

But 2017 has been a season of surprise. Dovizioso and Ducati have performed – and won – at tracks around which the Desmosedici has faltered since the glory days of Casey Stoner. What's more, showings at Jerez, the Sachsenring and Aragon – proper bogey tracks – weren't laden with disaster.

And Friday in Australia suggested Dovizioso could do the same, the Italian sounding bullish, that epic performance in Japan no doubt spurring him on to special feats.

Yet qualifying and race day pulled the veil of promise from the faces of all those dressed in red. As Lorenzo noted, the GP17's strong points – braking stability, traction out of slow corners – couldn't be utilised around Phillip Island's sweeping sinews.



Finding that racing line with the bike on its side wasn't easy, requiring the use of the throttle to align the bike through the corner.

Tyre consumption suffered, and Dovizioso ended the race "embarrassed" by his lack of traction.

A simple reading of the results may suggest the pressure got the better of Dovizioso with the finish line coming into sight, and Marquez his relentless best, always toward the front. His mistake on lap two braking for Doohan corner deprived him of the chance to, at the very best, fight for eighth.

But with the other GP17s nowhere (Lorenzo was 15th, Petrucci 21st), it simply proved it was Dovizioso that had made the difference through free practice and qualifying.

"It's not news because the characteristic of this track is to have good turning," said Dovizioso, 13th comfortably his worst finish of the year. "This confirms we still have that limit. We finished the tyre eight laps from the end, but I believe that our speed and the consumption of the tyre is a consequence of the turning. This track needs turning."

"We did really good races this year at tracks where I wasn't fast in the past. But this track has a particular characteristic and the turning is so important."

Fellow Ducati man Scott Redding's last-gasp pass, which pushed Dovizioso further back, added insult to injury. 33 points is a long way back. It has been a thrilling, spirited campaign from a rider in the form of his life. But not for the first time, Phillip Island was the undoing of Dovizioso and Ducati.



3. SUZUKI BACK FROM THE BRINK?

There really wasn't much to say about Suzuki's 2017 campaign that ran from March to September, other than disappointing, disastrous and so on. But two weekends later, and the outlook of riders Andrea Iannone and Alex Rins appears much brighter than before thanks to excellent showings in Japan and Australia.

For the first time since it was debuted in the premier class at the end of '14, the Suzuki GSX-RR looked like a fixed wet weather bike in the Japanese gloom. A week on and it performed admirably in the dry too, that agile chassis excelling with riders at full lean around Phillip Island's glorious succession of swoops.

Both Iannone and Rins put in their best dry-weather showings in Suzuki colours on Sunday, giving the manufacturer some vital momentum as it heads toward a crucial winter of development. Seeing Iannone in particular point and place the GSX-RR where he pleased was as welcome an addition as any to a frenetic, eight-rider battle.

It was wonderful to be reminded of those old fighting instincts after a year largely spent away from the top six. In this kind of form, only Zarco was a match for his ability to entertain.

"[Here] We have the bike most of the time at maximum angle," he explained on Sunday after finishing sixth. "And the Suzuki is one of the best bikes when it's like this. But when we pick up we lose a lot. I struggle from the beginning but I never gave up. I pushed at 150 percent." Rins was excellent too, running with the leading group for 22 laps, before falling away to settle for a safe eighth place.

The two showings follow a crucial post-race test at Aragon in late September when development direction for 2018 was assessed, as well as going over old set-ups and previously discarded parts. More a "tidying up" of the current bike according to team boss Davide Brivio than a "revolution."

The confidence that was sorely missing from Iannone's make-up began to return too. "In the test we improved a lot," he said. "But we didn't use new parts. We changed a little bit the setting and my feeling improved. I ride better. This is the result."

Brivio added: "We are quite pleased because in the past – 2015 especially, and also in '16 – we struggled in the wet. In Japan we did our best race of the season with both riders very close to the podium. The Motegi performance comes after the test at Aragon. There we tested something for 2018 but it was a time to review some settings, check again some parts – nothing new, or revolutionary but it tidied up the package, the parts and the setting. This gave Andrea more confidence. I saw him more relaxed, more confident looking ahead. The Aragon test was very positive for, let's say, mood and a motivation point of view."

MotoGP AUS







Joan Mir put any slim hopes of his rivals firmly in the dust with a very worthy Moto3 title confirmation in Australia



MotoGP AUS



KTM 1290 SUPER DUKE R **PURE, RAW** AND PROUDLY EXCESSIVE

Let the new LED headlight guide you as you embrace a hell of a ride on this heavenly creature. Packed with gut-wrenching performance and equally evil looks, this BEAST 2.0 clearly isn't for the faint of heart. If you think you've got what it takes, challenge yourself to see what real power and precision can feel like.



READY TO RACE
» www.ktm.com

www.kiska.com

Photo: R. Schiedl

KT

Please make no attempt to imitate the illustrated riding scenes, always wear protective clothing and observe the applicable provisions of the road traffic regulations!
The illustrated vehicles may vary in selected details from the production models and some illustrations feature optional equipment available at additional cost.



PROMISE UNFULFILLED?

Maverick Viñales' hopes of lifting the MotoGP trophy are all but shot after the Australian Grand Prix. But is it fair to judge 2017 as a total failure?

In many ways, Sunday's eight-rider duel at Phillip Island came to encapsulate Maverick Viñales' 2017. There was the initial promise, the expectation he would pose reigning champion Marc Marquez a real threat; he was doing just that before misfortune struck on lap 22, when Johann Zarco and Andrea Iannone put that kind of moves on him that would leave most dazed, confused and in need of the smelling salts; and then the late rally, the wiping out of Rossi's advantage in four laps to finish alongside – but just behind – his decorated teammate.

All in all, there was plenty to praise: a fine ride, his seventh podium of the year; an even better recovery from a position of peril; and a performance that, while not perfect, served as a timely reminder that a special talent resides behind that fixed, steely stare.

But ultimately, Viñales just came up short in a race he had designs on winning. There have been several of those afternoons (Mugello, Silverstone) through a frustrating and, at times, turbulent first season with Yamaha. With the title now out of sight – he sits 50 points back of Marquez, two races from home – a period of deep reckoning will no doubt follow the final outing in Valencia.

So how do we judge a year that started so bright, with convincing wins in Qatar, Argentina and France giving him the deserved title of early season favourite? It's fair to assume Viñales will look upon it as a disaster, his blowing of a 26-point lead and a position of strength in two races a clear source of frustration as he made his way to the summer break.

But it would be unfair to label it thus? Considering his previous standing within Suzuki, slotting into the Movistar Yamaha ranks, alongside nine-time champion Rossi, in a team designed around

the Italian was never going to be easy.

And prevailing against Marquez – two years his senior and riding better than ever – all the more so. Mid-season did shine a light on Viñales' lack of experience and fiery temperament however. Certain incidents underscored some current failings, and not just those apparent when on the bike – riding in the rain, or in the race's opening laps chief among them.

Take his early-season gripe with Michelin for instance. Having failed to extract the most from the French rubber in Austin and Jerez, those close to Viñales revealed the 22-year old was convinced the French firm was conspiring against him. A means of firing himself up, of creating an 'Us v Them' situation perhaps, but with hindsight, this acted more as an ongoing frustration that gnawed away at focus.

By Neil Morrison



Title rival Andrea Dovizioso noticed as much at Montmeló, Viñales' '17 nadir. "He wants to win, he's really aggressive and when you find difficult conditions like we have at this track, you have a shock, and you can work in a bad way, you are too aggressive." The same could be said of Texas and Assen, races he could – and probably should - have won but for an overly headstrong approach.

Then came the complications with set-up direction, with Rossi pushing in one way, Viñales another. The Spaniard wore a face of thunder from Assen through to Brno, the dawning of Yamaha's decision to pursue his more experienced team-mate's suggestions a sour pill to swallow in light of his own pre-season speed. Rossi's occasional, pointed barb appeared to rile him further, a situation he will surely handle with greater assurance in '18. Yet it's still worth noting Phillip Island was the first occasion Rossi had won out in an inter-team battle since June. Even when Viñales has appeared down and wounded, he had the beating of his elder. And all blame cannot be apportioned his way. For one, Yamaha's

set-up direction appears confused. The M1 remains a machine incapable of dealing with the slightly inconsistent nature of Michelin's tyre allocation, its ideal operating window a good deal narrower than that of its direct competitors – the Honda RC213V and Ducati's GP17. Viñales hasn't been the only one at a loss to explain the superiority of Johann Zarco's year-old bike at certain rounds either. Rossi has struggled for the best part of a season, his criticism of the '17 M1's ongoing traction, electronics and wet weather performance mirroring that of his younger companion.

According to one prominent member of the Catalan press, there was an acknowledgement from within Viñales' camp over the summer break that too much energy was being expended criticising set-up and Michelin – a sign of a willingness to take criticism on board, and iron out those faults. And while he hasn't outscored Marquez in a race since early June bar that fortunate afternoon at Silverstone, Viñales' battling responses to conditions that were far from ideal at the Sachsenring (bad qualifying) and Misano (wet race) were the

sign of a rider operating extremely close to the very highest level (not to mention one possessing a supreme ability to deal with the most considerable of pressures).

Yes, all the pieces are yet to come together. But other than Marquez and Rossi, who else possessed a complete armoury at such a tender age? With the resources at their disposal, and a more settled tyre allocation for '18, Yamaha is bound to work out a formula to extract consistency from its package sooner rather than later. A few tweaks to his own approach and '18 could well be his year.

There have been strops and tantrums along the way but don't expect this year's veritable set of lessons to go unlearned. As ex-team boss Pablo Nieto once told me: "He always wants more, more and more. He's never 100 percent happy." Viñales has time on his side and those doubting his talent need only consider Suzuki's struggles since his departure. Don't imagine this streetwise kid that regularly took on and beat Marquez in his youth will be going away anytime soon.

By Adam Wheeler
Photos by CormacGP/Danilo Petrucci personal collection

BEST ROOTS

DANILO PETRUCCI & MX





We wanted more time with Danilo Petrucci. Jovial Pramac PR Officer Federico Cappelli was great in securing an interview slot for us at the recent Grand Prix of Aragon but 'Petrux's' easy manner and sense of humour and great propensity to talk means that ten minutes soon runs to twenty and there are a plethora of questions we still wanted to ask, more anecdotes we wanted to mine.

The 27 year old (the day this magazine is published) is more than just an embracing story of unexpected success and development through an alternative route to MotoGP (he emerged from Superstock straight into the premier class in the CRT era and joined Pramac in 2015) but comes from a generation of Italian motorcycling talent that has stretched into Rally, Enduro and Motocross.

I can remember Federico telling me how much 'Petrux' likes his MX and it was only when sitting down to talk with the #9 – a witty and funny character even with his decent and heavily-accented English – that the enthusiasm for the dirt really shines through. He mentions MXGP rider Alessandro Lupino a lot. So after the chat in Aragon I called Alex for some memories of Danilo.

"We were on the same team in 2001," the former Honda rider and now Gebben Kawasaki Grand Prix man says. "I remember training together. It was at a sandy track with a house in the middle and we'd have the sort of fun that you normally did as kids. I have memories of the families sitting together having big meals. Danilo was a good rider but he was bigger than most of us and that probably didn't help."

"Our paths split when he moved away from motocross," he continues. "I can remember my Mum watching a MotoGP race one day and saying to me 'do you remember Danilo Petrucci? He's now in MotoGP!'" It was a pretty big surprise but it was cool to watch him do well. I think it is in his character to chase his goals quite hard. We got into contact again recently because of the Fiamme Oro police scheme."

During the flyaways Petrucci emails across some photos of himself on a KTM, the purple Fiamme shirt easily recognisable. "I started with a Polini pocketbike when I was three and I wore one of Capirossi's helmets because my Dad was his mechanic. The size was already OK! I was three and it was the same as Loris! The same happened for his racing suit when I was seven or eight! It was perfect for me," Petrucci smiles at the recollection back in Aragon and also the amusing observation of the diminutive 'Capi'. "My father was a bit scared of the competition of this world. All the riders had come from minimoto and pocketbike and I was very shy. He thought that if he put me into this battle it would be dangerous and I'd be scared."

Danilo might not court centre stage like some other MotoGP athletes but deals with the spotlight in a bold and entertaining (and courteous) fashion.



The guy was weaned on motorcycles. "My city is in the middle of Italy, a region called Umbria, and surrounded by mountains and trails, not the sea. So I started in this environment when I was seven and rode trial with my Dad until I won the Italian championship," he says. "I was also doing minicross and I won that as well. The prize was a week in California to meet Jeremy McGrath. It was a total dream. That week we went to Chaparral, Troy Lee Designs, Pro Circuit and to McGrath's facility to see him train. On Saturday we went to Anaheim – I cannot remember if it was 1 or 2 but it was January 2000 – and I was nine.

That was McGrath's last season...

That's right. On the Yamaha-

And then he tried for a bit on the KTM. Were you a bit crazy for motocross and supercross at that time?

Yeah, I was racing it from nine to fourteen in Italy, so for three-four years I was against guys like Tony [Cairolì] and [Alessandro] Lupino. Tony was in the higher class of minicross. We were racing small wheel and in Italy at that time there were four-five categories: one was for rookies with 65cc, from eight-nine years old was 'Cadet' 85 small wheel then 'Junior' with big wheels and 'Senior', so 85s but with modifications possible; they were like small MotoGP bikes! I remember racing in Senior class with a 125 swingarm, the shock and fork and a new cylinder every race!



So it was good having a father as a mechanic...

Yeah! My father was a driver, mechanic, chef: everything.

You must have faced riders like [Davide] Guarneri, [Matteo] Bonini...

Yes, those guys. Lupino was the same age. There were a lot of riders. People like Thomas Oldrati who is now in Enduro.

Could you race any of them?

Yeah, I remember all those guys and I think they remember me. I was always in the top ten but I wasn't one of the fastest. Lupino was really, really fast. After a few years my dream was always to ride a GP bike. During 2004, when I was fourteen, my father bought an RGV250 and we tried the bike on the road near the mountains. In Italy you can ride on the

road with a 50cc scooter at fourteen but I'd never had an asphalt experience. We had a few runs on this bike and then went to Misano. I remember the Superpole lap [WorldSBK] that year in 2004 was by James Toseland and he did 1min 29 and I did a 2min 29! That was my best lap. I went to Vallenga and broke the bike and this experience ended my two-stroke story because I never rode one again on a track.

What kind of motocross rider were you? Super aggressive or more smooth?

It depended. I remember Stefan Everts riding always on the pegs and using fifth gear even in the tight corners! I never used a 450 on the track. I was a bit scared because to really know that



bike I think you have to go twice a week to stop getting tired. Now I use motocross for training. For three years now I have gone to Sardinia for training in the winter-

To sandy Riola, like a lot of MXGP guys...

That's right and where the Internazionali Italia starts. I've met a lot of riders there. And for me it is important to get a lot of bike time, so just thirty minutes in Riola is completely different compared to any other track. You have to start riding like Everts there!

It is bullshit. We cannot train on a MotoGP bike and if we could then we'd still get injuries. Even Pro motocross racers are often injured and they can ride whenever they want. If I had the choice between half a day on a bike or half a day in the gym I'll always choose the bike. We are obliged to take a motocross, enduro, flat-track or trials bike most of the time if we want to ride. Everything is dangerous. We saw with Nicky this year...I use my bicycle a lot as well. I always thought that was quite safe...but then you are sharing the road.

“WHEN I WAS IN TROUBLE AS A KID ON A MOTOCROSS TRACK THEN YOU DON'T HAVE SECTORS OR DATA TO KNOW WHAT IS GOING ON SO MY SOLUTION WAS TO BRAKE AS LATE AS I COULD. I SAW I COULD DO THE SAME IN MotoGP AND MAYBE GAIN A TENTH OF A SECOND...”

But concentration is critical in sand; lose it for a moment and you crash. In the last few years I've used a KTM 250 SX-F and it is a really nice bike. Very powerful but handles so nicely and you can play a lot with it. When I ride Enduro I always use a two-stroke. I have a 250 Husqvarna and a 300 KTM as well as a 300 Beta. Where I live means quite extreme enduro. I train with two friends, one is in the enduro world championship and the other in the Italian series. We are more or less on the same level. I still believe I can be more competitive in the Enduro World Championship than MotoGP! I'm convinced.

What do you think of injuries in MotoGP because of off-road riding and MX?

My brother races World Championship Downhill and the motorcycle might be dangerous but at least going with him means I am alone in the mountain and it is my responsibility if I crash. I am very lucky because I started riding a dirtbike when I was child. This means my movements are more natural and it's easy for me to get on a motocross bike. I don't know how many MotoGP riders can get on a track like Riola or go Enduro riding with the likes of [Alex] Salvini or [Manuel] Monni; for sure they are faster but I am not so far away. I'm lucky. But for me it is right that riders can and should ride something else at home. It is their own risk. Nobody wants to get hurt or injured but it is a necessary risk: holding the handlebars is the best training for me.



The way you ride a MotoGP bike now: did any of that come from motocross and that dirt background?

It is a natural instinct for me to brake later. It is like an obsession. When I was in trouble as a kid on a motocross track then you don't have sectors or data to know what is going on so my solution was to brake as late as I could. I saw I could do the same in MotoGP and maybe gain a tenth of a second. Braking hard has always been one of my strengths, even if I know that sometimes braking earlier will help solve a problem for me! Motocross helped also in terms of contact with other riders and this for sure gave me some problems sometimes! I also have joy to play when it's wet and sincerely I don't know why that is.

A traction thing perhaps?

Yes, to do with grip and controlling the bike when the track is very dirty. I don't know why exactly but I do know that motocross helps me a lot. I also think it is a good 'path' to get here. Minibikes are useful but motocross also. What I miss now is experience with a GP bike because when I changed from motocross I was into Superstock and couldn't do

anything to the bike and I miss some precision and experience on how to ride and open the throttle. Up until now my big gap with Dovizioso is through the time we both open the throttle. We can be the same on a single lap but in the second part of the race I'm too aggressive with the gas because I never rode a two-stroke on the track and understood calm throttle control and engine management. I have to improve little by little and I miss a lot of 125 time at national or GP level in my teenage years. I was in Superstock until I was 21 and then straight into MotoGP.

Way-past our allotted time, Danilo is fetched away to a waiting TV crew. It is hardly surprising he is in demand after four podium finishes this season. Rossi might be the Italian icon, Dovizioso the unexpected championship contender, Iannone the bad boy but #9 has that everyman, bike-fan quality that is endearing. His roots of cutting through roots around his town of Terni make him even more of an appreciated underdog in the pressurised world of MotoGP.

DANILO PETRUCCI & MX





100%

100% have renewed terms with one of their original athletes when the company re-awoke the brand in 2012. Monster Million winner (as well as last weekend's Red Bull Straight Rhythm victor – he is now just missing the new Paris Supercross going to clean-up this off-season) Marvin Musquin will again be using the San Diego company's wares in 2018 so this is a prime moment to look at some of the Racecraft designs and schemes hitting dealer shelves and inhabiting catalogues in the coming months.

The Roxbury's blue frame is an eye-catcher but so is the bright and light display of the Eclipse. The Calculus is a livelier option while the Bilal might entice Honda owners due to the simple red and white hue. The Racecraft (and Forecast roll-off system) is a very popular option in the goggle market due to an effective marriage of performance & price.

The goggle has the obligatory three layer face foam, removable noseguard and outriggers, an anti-fog coated lexan lens with nine pin fixing points (the most in the industry), air intakes and a 45mm strap. In the box is also a stack of tear-offs (and an extra clear lens in the case of the mirrored models) and a microfibre bag. The 65-75 dollar price point is extremely competitive.





www.ride100percent.com



+
WORLD
+



CHAMPION



ANSWER[®]

ANSWERRACING.COM





BUILD IT, MAKE IT, RACE IT:

THE MAKER OF MATTERLEY

By Adam Wheeler
Photos by Ray Archer



Ever the perfectionist Johnny Douglas Hamilton is on the edge of a frown on Saturday at the Motocross of Nations. The ruts are a little long and he feels the ground hasn't been worked through enough. In the days before the 71st edition of the event (and the third MXoN where he has had an influence on the surface) he was keen to properly profile the jumps, allowing riders to take-off and play with the motorcycle rather than shoot up straight like some sort of rocket and then thunder back to the landing with a ligament jarring thud. These were some of the last tweaks. The majority of his long days and the better part of three months at the site outside of Winchester were occupied with building and landscaping other elements of the facility; 'JDH' has chiselled many elements in the framework of Matterley Basin, meaning his influence

His company, Terra Forma, deals with clients looking for his skills in knowing what makes a racer psyched to attack a course; the by-product of which tends to be exciting action and motocross at its spectacular and vibrant best.

A former British Championship racer, Hamilton revisited Matterley after a spell away from working on high profile international venues (he was studying a university degree on audio and acoustics) and was joined by Youthstream's crew in the final days before the Nations descended on Winchester. One of our first ports of call at the circuit itself was a chat with the 38 year old, who'd been a summer resident at Steve Dixon's house since being tempted back to curate the Matterley mounds. Predictably we find him in a digger, fashioning a leap for a Monster Energy Baja Buggy display adja-

“PEOPLE TRY TO PRODUCE RUTS AND RIDERS CAN BE AGGRESSIVE WHEN USING THEM, BUT YOU HAVE TO BE CAREFUL OR YOU CAN REMOVE AN ENTIRE TYPE OF RACECRAFT; WHEN IT IS JUST ROUGH OR CHOPPY GUYS CAN GO WHERE THEY WANT...”

stretches beyond creation and upgrade of arguably one of the best motocross tracks in Europe.

Hamilton has featured in these pages before. The Scot co-crafted the Gore Basin circuit on the Isle of Wight that staged British and English Grands Prix in the mid-noughties, a revised Matchams Park, had a hand in the temporary track in the complex of Sun City in South Africa and then Matterley in 2006 as well as more on both sides of the Atlantic.

cent to the new, spiralling second turn of the motocross trajectory and we're able to interrupt his work for a chat about the track and racing generally.

Why come back to Matterley?

I think it was a bit of unfinished business. I built this in 2006 and since then I've probably totalled thousands of hours of working on the site; a fraction of that was on track. It has been more about roadways, pads for marquees and terrace beer gardens and stuff like that.

JDH & MATTERLEY BASIN

It really does feel – along with a few others – that I've been involved from the ground up. It has been developed and developed. I went away for a couple of years for a few reasons but when I heard the Nations was going to be here I felt that I'd be the one judged on it. I knew there were a few complaints about the soil and we have to screen the soil here to get rid of all the flint. It had become stony again and the landings were too heavy. There were some things about the track that made it less enjoyable. I knew it needed a bit of TLC, and with some arm-twisting Steve managed to convince me to come back and do it again. Justin [Barclay] had been taking care of it for a few years so I wanted to make sure I wasn't standing on any toes and had to give everyone their place. It has been a crazy amount of work.

How long have you been down here?

I did about 1600 hours before the race took place. Over the summer I did almost a thousand in eight and a half weeks which was a bit nuts and we were flat out.

For the people who come to Matterley each year for the British Grand Prix where will they see all that effort?

They might not. A lot of it was behind the scenes. The jump on top of the hill: I have a series of pictures to show how it was built and the labour involved is excruciating. For every piece of work on this track I think it is ten times as long to do something similar. Making a table-top will take the best part of a day in order to have a nice finish whereas here you have to strip the top-soil back from the chalk over a huge area - much bigger than you'd shape a jump for – because you need to get it out of the way.







Then you shape the chalk and see how it sits on the landscape, which is difficult because you are surrounded by big piles of soil. You need to look at the right angles and places. Then you push all the soil back in. For the dirt of the actual circuit layout you have to scrape it and then take it to a screener to get rid of all these massive flint stones before putting it back. It's excruciating. I'm sure there is no other track like it in the world. If we knew it would involve this kind of preparation in the beginning then we wouldn't be here...but we are here and when you see it like this and you might have a part of the weekend that was like 2006 then you think 'it was worth it'.



JDH & MATTERLEY BASIN

Have you been keeping one eye on MXGP and do you have an opinion on what riders are dealing with these days?

There was a period where it was going to quite a few new places and through that evolution it was looking a little scruffy. You were looking at a few tracks like Istanbul that had not been ridden before and they just didn't look fit for a Motocross World Championship. We know the logic of why the series went to some places and venues but sometimes it didn't look up to par. I do think that Youthstream have become better at doing those races. For example something like Assen is a cool race with a big crowd and it kinda works. The presentation of the series is still really on-point and looks better and so much more professional. Youthstream do so many things very well and a couple where you scratch your head a little bit; such as the short lap-times at a few places.

In 2015 track preparation was a hot potato in the paddock but the moves Youthstream made to improve that have had a good effect in the last two seasons. There is still a lot of diversity in MXGP between new tracks, old tracks, sand tracks...

My ethos has always been about variety, and the difference of the terrain, surfaces and landscapes in Europe is far broader than anywhere else. I have noticed a formulaic nature to the tracks now and they are

much shorter with similar types of obstacles and that might irk some of the riders nowadays. I've noticed a lot less straights. I'm a fan of good jumps and they contribute a lot to tracks but you need to have a bit of balance. Maybe the GP tracks don't 'flow' as well as the American ones. You don't see those nice long drags from one corner to another and big sweeps on stuff.

There is also younger generation racing in Grand Prix...

I know! I feel old-school now! I went over to Argentina at the start of this year and that place was amazing - I would say it's the best track in the GPs - and yet I was thinking recently that there is not a single straight on it!

Any stretch between corners has an obstacle of some kind. The logic - as someone from Youthstream explained it to me a few years ago - is that they want every camera angle to show the bikes moving around in the shot. It's dynamic and it works. People see it on TV and say "wow, it looks so busy and action-packed", but as a rider you know it would be nice to see some straights in there where you can see who the late brakiers are. Watching them come from top gear all the way down through the box. You can also see a different kind of pass. I do think that straights are maybe undervalued. I am not one of these people who pushes for 'old-school' as I don't think this is necessarily the way to go and I prefer to see things innovate rather than regress but you need balance. With regards to the prep I do notice a lot of 'slot car racing' too now and you see that in America as well.

People try to produce ruts as they are really good fun and riders can be aggressive when using them, but you have to be careful or you can remove an entire type of racecraft; when it is just rough or choppy dirt guys can go where they want. You can go wide and cut tight to the

apex or come to the apex and drift wide; a little like road racing. You see a lot less of that racecraft now and often due to the prep and because tracks are often over-watered too close to the races. I don't want to sound like I am criticizing because there is a lot of people working very hard on this, but you want to try and get the moisture into the track nice-and-early in the week, even if you try and seal it back down after. You want some ruts in corners but not so many that riders are confined to them and cannot be creative with their line choice. Any time it is over-watered for practice on Saturday then you end up with the 'Scalectrix'. Maybe it doesn't bother the younger generation so much but I can see it bothering the older ones and the riders that really liked to think about their race craft. I built a track with Willie Simpson [former GP racer and father of MXGP star Shaun] recently up in Fife and you could see him



studying every corner so carefully to see exactly where to place the inside corner posts. He was thinking that a lead rider is always going to stay close to the apex and drift wide and if the apex post is in just the right place, if your following you can cut tight and slip up the inside of someone as they exit quite easily. Position it poorly and you get a favoured line. If you're faced by three fat ruts on the other hand then that thought process is completely off the table. Somebody like Willie must have spent so much of his time thinking of that kind of racecraft. With the new type of track prep it's often more about 'how can I get into that rut and rail it as hard as I can'. I do have some sympathy for the older guys.

Has Matterley given you a taste again of doing this at the highest level?

I'm kinda happy on my own in a field! If somebody leaves me to my devices and I can work with my own ideas then I'm happy. If you come to these big events and you have twenty people pulling you in a million directions then it is very busy and very stressful. If I could deal with it better than I could get 'into' it more.

How would you also manage re-sculpting some of the older and more established tracks?

I might get a kick out of it. If someone said something like 'Glen Helen' then you'd say "OK, no problem" and there are some tracks on the world championship calendar where I think 'that would be fun to do' but I can also think of some that would be more of a challenge. The politics is a part of the job...but it seems easier to work around that aspect now.

A lot of riders still rate Matterley as one of their favourites and you are like a custodian of the place. How does that make you feel?

Happy...but with a lot of anxiety. When you have been away a while then you second-guess yourself – well, I do that anyway – and any changes you have done. To see the guys ride and to see the track work and the guys enjoy it: this is fun for me. There is always stuff to worry about.

Hamilton is being beckoned on the radio. He's working with his own team as well as the Youthstream staff that are helping to erect the final pieces around the biggest race of the year. The weekend itself would turn out to be arduous. Hamilton may have had his doubts on a dry Saturday but the track was excellent: fast, grippy and varied. It allowed enough choice and freedom for AMA 250MX Champion Zach Osborne to plot a course from outside the top ten to win the MX2 Qualification Heat. The rain then arrived on Sunday. Considering the quantity of water and the impact on the viewing areas and thoroughfares the track was again in good shape. Deep in the aftermath and with Matterley just starting to grass over again, Hamilton would send a message tinged with frustration explaining how the region was dry and rain-free for a whole two weeks after the Nations raceday. "It was the worst case scenario for everyone to have had that weather," he evaluated. "The estate was compromised to the degree that every single job on site became complicated. It was a case of 'survival' and the track took a real beating too, it's depressing to watch the footage from Sunday. At the same time it was passable all day and the riders were still clearing the jumps till the very end. You had eight very experienced operators working flat out on the circuit all weekend and you can't fault a thing they did. It could have been so much worse if it wasn't for their hard work. That's motocross."

THE NEED TO 'BAKE'?

November creeps closer and for many professional motocrossers the period of hardcore base training for a new season also draws near. The holiday days and weeks of October are now drawing thin as the mornings get darker.

On a recent trip to the U.S. I was lucky enough to sit down with famed trainer Aldon Baker. The South African was overseeing several of his athletes at the Monster Energy Cup so gaining half an hour of his time (and watching some of the press day practice laps with him on Friday) was something of a privilege.

Baker and his 'Factory' complex in Florida have become an elixir or mecca that top flight athletes recognise and crave to reach the pinnacle of supercross/motocross. His record is phenomenal, and looks to be running strong into 2018 with Marvin Musquin appearing so confident and quick in 'pre-season' supercross appearances: the Frenchman just needs to scoop the inaugural Paris SX in November to further emphasise his status as the hot favourite going to Anaheim 1 on January 6th.

Carmichael, Stewart, Villopoto, Dungey (the union with #5 leading to unparalleled success in the recently retired rider's career), Townley, Musquin, Roczen, (for a term) Rattray, Jason Anderson and the assistance for Zach Osborne to become a double champion in one season means a CV and streak of glory quite unlike anything else in motocross/motorsport. He even focussed solely on the late Nicky Hayden around the time of his MotoGP World Championship win in the middle of the last decade.

It was also curious to hear about his future plans and for expansion of the Baker's Factory – even if it is exclusive to the KTM group these days. Motorsport Director Pit Beirer said to me recently that it took seven years to click the final piece of the puzzle into their comprehensive North American racing programme when he inked a deal with Baker last January.

De Coster, title-winning pedigree, SX-F technology and now the most-sought after specialist in the business: Red Bull KTM/Rockstar Energy Husqvarna saddles are arguably at the top of the pecking order, and it is an amazing turnaround from the time that their own riders were lodging lawsuits against them at the end of the last decade.

Baker, friendly, courteous and talkative ("For sure I was scared!" Musquin said when asked what he initially expected of his alliance with the renowned task-master in 2015) spoke about his work and mentioned that the rider/sportsman's psyche was the next area for exploration and development; hinting the aspects of physiology and nutrition have been extensively mined and are relatively formulaic when tailored to the individual.

By Adam Wheeler



Perhaps some of his mental coaching has been most evident with Osborne's evolution from fast and exciting athlete with potential to a 'weapon' of ruthlessness, to the point where the former GP rider is able to snatch a championship in the penultimate turn of the final Main of a pressurised 250SX season. Musquin as well showed no traces of vulnerability at the Sam Boyd to claim a million. "He helped me right away in the first year," Musquin said. "I had more confidence and I won a supercross championship in the first season."

A figure like Aldon Baker and his knowledge and guidance is an exclusive and proven advantage but that's not to say it is essential. In Las Vegas I was on interview duty with Eli Tomac and it was interesting to hear the extremes by which the 24 year old lives: supercross, Kawasaki, Monster Energy stardom to countryside-loving outdoor boy. An athlete surrounded by expertise and advice and yet prepares for one of the most demanding

motorsports there is through a low-key collaboration with his father. Frantic motorcycle racer to lonesome hunter that stocks his freezer with the efforts of his leisure pursuit. Tomac is not the only individual to excel by their own means: Ken Roczen, Tony Cairoli, Clement Desalle and, most notably, Jeffrey Herlings are just some of the names that pop to mind having achieved big things largely on their own steam.

Baker's work will come under scrutiny again if Musquin can emerge to lead a team like Red Bull KTM and ultimately head the 450SX championship (with SX incorporating some innovative modifications for 2018 it would seem after the announcement in Tampa this week) and if Anderson can develop from front-runner to consistent race winner. His influence will also be measured by the effectiveness of the staff he wishes to put in place to extend his operation.

The possibilities for those elite (KTM or Husky armed) racers looking for the final x-factor might be within in reach if the lonely road of self-education doesn't work out.

0 **FEATURE**

SHOW RUNNER



**WE ASKED FORMER DIRECTOR OF SUPERCROSS AND NOW
SENIOR DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS 2 WHEEL FOR FELD
MOTORSPORT, DAVE PRATER ABOUT SOME ASPECTS OF HIS ROLE
IN CONTROL OF AMA SUPERCROSS AND THE SEVENTH RUNNING
OF THE MONSTER ENERGY CUP IN LAS VEGAS AS WELL AS THE
EVENT'S ROLE TRIALLING IDEAS FOR THE MAIN SERIES...**

By Adam Wheeler

Photos by Taku Nagami/Monster Energy

Portrait by Ray Archer



How are you steering the ship now?

About a year and a half ago the President of Feld Motorsport retired and my boss, Todd Jendro, stepped into that role and is now overseeing anything to do with motorsports and Feld. With that I stepped into Todd's role and oversee everything two wheel. It's been good but a bit of a strange transition because I am more hands-off than I was in the past. The Arenacross portion of the job has been interesting. I didn't think they [SX and AX] were really that different until I got into it and I realise they are quite a bit different and in many ways. It's been fun though and a new chapter. Mike Muye and his staff have not missed a beat.

People are used to seeing you in control at SX events so it is now much more management and people don't bother you or contact you like they did before?

It is slowly changing. I had been in that role for so long that some people still come to me, which is fine but they are slowly transitioning to Mike and he is doing a great job. I am normally a hands-on guy but now I am learning a new role and having to stand back a bit more.

What are the nuts and bolts of the job?

More of a 'thirty thousand foot' strategy and planning with each department a lot more, like the booking department and where we are going in 2019 and '20; trying to plan a little further out and working with every department even more than I was in the past so they are all on the same page moving forward.

There has been so much talk about AMA SX in Europe...

It has been a challenge. We definitely want to grow the sport of supercross and we'd love to international but right now we are not ready. We will continue to push and to get our partners onboard but for now we'll stay in North America. Hopefully in the next four-six years we will venture over to Europe.



The main thing is: how can we make Supercross as good as it can be? How can we expand its global footprint in every way? We started the livestream last year and we'll continue it again. We are looking at world-wide growth and if you look at our social media numbers and the pay per view from 2017 then 50% if not more of our audience is from outside the United States. It is definitely the next step.

The problem is that the sport, internationally, doesn't have much elbow room...

There are a lot of events and different things going on. It is a delicate balance and we don't want to upset that. We want to work with everyone and be good partners. It becomes a challenge but we are working through it and I'm confident in the near-future we'll figure something out.

WE WILL CONTINUE TO GET OUR PARTNERS ONBOARD BUT FOR NOW WE'LL STAY IN NORTH AMERICA. HOPEFULLY IN THE NEXT 4-6 YEARS WE WILL VENTURE OVER TO EUROPE.

If you had to take that first toe-dip outside of the USA then what could be the most likely location?

France is definitely a front-runner. Great Britain, Spain... we've looked at a multitude of countries but – and don't hold me to this – France is probably one of the first we'd explore.

The Monster Energy Cup: there was talk that it would hop out of Vegas and travel around the USA. Is that idea still on the agenda?

It is still on the agenda. We've contemplated it a few times but the Sam Boyd Stadium gives us a unique footprint because you can take the track outside the stadium and there are not many places in the country – if not the world – where you can do that with the true supercross width of 22ft. That's not the only thing that has kept us here because we also have a good relationship with Sam Boyd and Vegas and Supercross. There have been two events here for a long time with the Supercross, US Open and the Monster Energy Cup for over twenty years. It is always a successful place for us. I think we will eventually take it to other places but

we're committed to 2018 and we'll see what happens. In the short-term we'll probably stay southwest of the United States and California.

How do you feel about the novelty of it? The Paddock Party is one aspect and the Monster Million is a USP but will it always hinge on the rider turnout?



"WE WILL HAVE STANDING METAL LANDING PADS. IF YOU REMEMBER WE DID IT HERE [MEC] FIRST BEFORE MXGP! WE THOUGHT ABOUT DOING IT THIS YEAR BUT WERE NOT READY TO PULL THE TRIGGER. WE WILL ALSO GO TO A THREE MAIN EVENT FORMAT AT THREE ROUNDS NEXT YEAR..."

I think so. We have to try and always keep it fresh. It is already a great formula so we didn't want to mess with it too much but this year we did something a little different by making the Joker Lane a shortcut instead of a disadvantage. That will be interesting. When we were doing the US Open it was difficult to get the top guys because it was an Arenacross and they didn't look at it like a Supercross or as an advantage to figure out where they were moving into the supercross season. But for this we haven't really had any issues getting the top guys for the Monster Energy Cup since its inception. If you look at who is here today then the ones that are missing are unfortunately injured or have just had surgery or they don't have a ride like Chad. It hasn't been an issue and if it ever does then we'll have to adjust. But I think they like it because it is a fun race but also a chance for them to see where they are and test some new things.

Can this event ever really be used as a litmus test for new ideas that could feed into Supercross?

Well, we will have standing metal landing pads for the supercross season. If you remember we did it here first before MXGP! We thought about doing it this year but were not ready to pull the trigger. We will also go to a three main event format at three rounds of supercross next year. It won't be one class but for 450 and 250 classes and will be run almost identical to this. The 250 race will be timed instead of laps and will be longer as they go on, so for the 250 I think it is 6 minutes and 1 lap, then 8+1 and 12+1 and the 450 is 8, 12 and 15+1 and we'll take the combined score from that for the overall. It will happen at Anaheim 2, Atlanta and Minneapolis. That's the experiment and we'll see but it all started here and it works. We'll slowly introduce it and it is more validation for what goes on at the Monster Energy Cup.





Milestone are making a brave entry into the American market with their first attempt at an official AMA Supercross licence in a new title that will be launched in February 2018. Sales and Marketing Director of the Italian company, Luisa Bixio, was in Las Vegas to show off the first Beta of the game that frankly looked stunning. "The engine is the same we have used for the last MXGP game but Supercross is very different from MX because the physics are different. It is dirtbike racing but in terms of game development we couldn't bring much across because it is so dissimilar." We asked for five minutes of her time for some more details...

You mentioned the game was two years in the making, was that principally about learning the sport?

For sure. It is the first edition for us and we started two years ago with this new engine but the design and the new physics for supercross has taken a long time. I think the results are very good if you have a look at the game. Of course we are looking to the second game twelve months down the line and for the next season.

It is a challenge for a European company to come over and make an impression in this territory and with such an American version of dirtbike racing?

It is a big challenge because up until now we have only worked with European licences like MotoGP and MX and in the past Rally. Supercross is clearly a US entity so the work and the approach with the marketing and the licence and to collect the references has been a big job but I think it is very important for us to expand and grow.

You have experience with Dorna and MotoGP but this must be a major step...

Such different sports and different games. In terms of the dimensions of the game then they are similar but because this was our first for supercross it was a bit more difficult to get right whereas we are now five years down the line with MotoGP and we know much more about the sport. It is difficult to compare.

**MILESTONE TALK
FIRST SUPERCROSS
GAME FOR 2018**

Supercross is very much in the first half of the calendar year. How will that affect release times for future editions and having the latest teams and riders in the game?

Honestly I cannot say because this is the first release and we haven't started yet with the second. We are in discussions now but, in general, a game release at the beginning of the championship is always good. We try to do this with MotoGP and release the latest version in June so I think February would be a good time for supercross.



Hey Marv: any chance of a loan?





Photo: R. Schedl

WE ARE TRUE TO OUR ROOTS

THE 2018 HUSQVARNA MOTORCYCLES CASUAL CLOTHING COLLECTION

The Husqvarna Motorcycles casual clothing and accessories range reflects the brand's values with its premium quality and authentic Swedish simplicity. Designed for an adventurous lifestyle, yet expressed in a well-fitted, modern style that embraces the essence of Husqvarna Motorcycles. The new range of casual clothing and lifestyle accessories will allow you to fully embrace our motorcycling culture.





Protect like only a Defender can.

We get protection. And we get that you can't wait for your protection to dry off between motos. That's why we've reinvented the roost guard with features like water-proof padding, a modular design to fit with your Atlas Brace, and venting where it matters - so finding the perfect protection is easier, and drier, than ever.

Available in adult, and Jr size.







FLY-ING WITH ARNAUD TONUS:

SWISS MXGP STAR CHATS RIDING GEAR

Wilvo Yamaha were distinctive on-track in their first MXGP campaign with Grand Prix and moto wins as well as podium presence with Shaun Simpson and Arnaud Tonus (the Scot and Swiss also signed up for 2018 with Jeremy Seewer allegedly unseating former MX2 rival Benoit Paturel as the third rider on the satellite YZ450F). They also stood out thanks to their Fly Racing wares with Lite Hydrogen and Kinetic Era gear – featuring the Boa system for a close and reactive waist fit on the riding pants.

We grabbed five minutes with Swiss GP chequered flag-grabber Tonus (surely one of the most heart-warming triumphs of MXGP in 2017) to ask about his clothing compared to other brands and why the Fly catalogue is worth examination after testing and ‘wearing’ it through some of the hardest conditions (and there was certainly enough rain and mud through the recently-closed nineteen round contest).

So, you’ve worn Fox, Thor, UFO in the past. What was it about Fly that grabbed your attention?

I actually like the new collection because of the variety in the colour combination between jersey and pants. It’s kinda cool and something that I’ve missed in the last couple of years because the sets have been so defined. They have worked a lot with the pants and the fixation on the back – the Boa ratchet. I was a bit wary if it would work or not and keep tight when you are moving a lot on the bike in a GP race but the pant did not slip as much as the ones I had before. You can adjust to make it exactly as you want. The composition and the position of the Boa is really good. I like the style, it feels different and I think you could see me really easily on the track.

Is there generally a big difference in riding gear?

The stuff can be pretty similar. Before I wore Fox then Thor came up with something very light and it felt like a pyjama. It was great to wear but maybe not so great for the average rider because after three or four times on the track the wear was noticeable and a stone would cause a bit of damage. Fox’s Flexair was a step forward and there was a lot of stretch around the knee area and where we struggle to get good movement because of our braces. Fox had a good feeling around the company and the way they did things. Fly’s pant, like I said, have this Boa system which I hadn’t seen before and it allows you to be really precise. You tie up the front and then just click it around on the back. We didn’t have so much contact with Fly through the season but they are growing and pushing internationally.

Does it matter that you were one of the few Fly guys in MXGP?

Yeah, it was cool to have something a bit special and different. They came up with the new gear before I had even seen it in the U.S. and that was impressive. That variation between the jersey and pant is really nice. It is like in normal life, if you think about it then you rarely wear the same colour t-shirt or shirt and pant.

When you get on the bike you have a feeling for the chassis, suspension, tyres, levers etc. Is it a little bit the same for how the gear fits and feels?

A little bit...but to be honest I kinda adapt myself to whatever I’m wearing. Every brand feels a bit different but the gap is not that big. If anything I’d say the biggest difference is with the boots.

Blake
Baggett

2018 RACEWEAR
**KINETIC
ERA**





FLY
RACING

FLYRACING.COM

TIMES ARE A CHANGING...

An interesting last four days in the sport over here. We had a guy in overalls and an alter ego become the number one attraction at the Red Bull Straight Rhythm race and for the first time since 1985, the super-cross series over here got a major revamp. Let's tackle both those topics right here and right now.

This past weekend the Red Bull Straight Rhythm was held in Southern California with the man of the off-season so far, Red Bull KTM's Marvin Musquin, taking home 25k to add to his 1 million won the week before for sweeping all three main events at the Monster Energy Cup.

The event is pretty cool, it's a 40-second straight line rhythm section that definitely takes some serious skill but yet the riders don't need to be at max effort for it. There was a 450SX class, a 250SX class (won by Shane McElrath of the TLD KTM team) and a two-stroke class and that was the star of the show.

There was former national champion 46-year old Mike Brown, there was former

250SX winner turned off-roader Ryan Sipes, a current pro that races two-strokes in Gared Steinke, 9-time SX and MX champion Ryan Villopoto and 3-time SX and MX champion Chad Reed all lined up to take on a guy wearing overalls, pounding beers, riding a 1998 CR250 quasi-superhero named Ronnie Mac.

It was a bit nutty that Mac had so many people over at his pits but not as nutty as him actually beating out Villopoto to make it to the main against Steinke who then defeated Mac to take home the 10k prize. There was no question that this race, featuring everything from that '98 CR 250 to a modern Husqvarna 300cc to an older Kawasaki KX250 that included a mish-mash of parts from Pro Circuit and James Stewart's old

factory machine in 2005, was the star of the show.

Compared to the Monster Cup format from the week before, this was fresh, this was inventive and it was exciting. I suppose I could completely understand if some parents were a bit puzzled by the industry embracing someone like Mac over Musquin and if I've honest, I wonder that also but at the end of the day, I had fun. It was fun to see RV on a two-stroke as well as Brown and it was fun to see this guy sending it on the 1998 machine. The other stuff lingered in the back of my mind but I can't deny I laughed a lot and was entertained. The only bummer of the night was Reed hurting his ankle in practice and withdrawing from the event.

By Steve Matthes



Red Bull Straight Rhythm was something else indeed and in an off-season that's filling up with more races, I hope something like this can stay around. It was fun and funny which can be a rare thing to bottle up and present in an evening.

The 2018 Monster Energy Supercross series will be vastly different as there was an announcement of a new points structure, a combined 250SX coast race, no semi races (which was implemented a few years ago and then changed back) and most important of all, three rounds that have three main events (in both classes) with Olympic scoring deciding an overall winner. The twist with these, besides the obvious of having two more main events, is one main will be eight minutes, one will be twelve minutes and one will be fifteen. That's for the 450SX class, the 250SX will be six, ten and twelve.

The points change is a small one but it awards each position in the main event with a different point value as opposed to before where the final three spots all got one point. The gap between first and fifth was nine points before, now it's eight points. I didn't do the math but the promoters of the race say that with this 2018 points structure, Eli Tomac would've been the champion and not Ryan Dungey so winning is rewarded more...although as stated, it's a small one.

Adding one more 250SX East/West combined race in Indianapolis to go with the standard one in Las Vegas is a win in my opinion. These races are tremendous and add to the excitement of a title chase where wild swings could happen. My only complaint with this is they should add more!

Three races (Anaheim 2, Atlanta and Minneapolis) will feature the three main events format and again, I'm for this change.

It should make things very exciting for the series and maybe a wild card rider who gets a good start will capture the short eight-minute main event. What a boon to that rider, his team and sponsors. Sharing the ability to win is a great thing for our sport that too often sees runaways. I probably would've made them all the same amount of time but hey, let's try this and see where we're at.

I applaud the folks at Feld Motorsports for making these changes and the best thing about them is if they're not working, they can switch back and try something else. There's a chance these three Mains unlock some serious excitement for the sport and gets everyone talking about it which is always a plus. Anyone who's read my Blogs or listened to me over the years knows that I'd go even further with this stuff. If you're not evolving, you're dying and in today's age of short-term attention spans, you've got to find a way to capture interest. Let's see if this works!



leatt

We focussed on Leatt's improving gear in the last issue, now time to look at a couple of pieces of new protection from the South African innovators. The **4.5 helmet** (made from a Polymer shell compared to the 5.5's composite) is a variation on the premium 5.5 but still has the same performance potential (helping to reduce the risk of head impact at concussion level by up to 30% and rotational acceleration to your head and brain by up to 40%) thanks to the 360 Turbine technology. The system works through the damping effect of 11 'turbines' made of energy-absorbing material. Leatt claim that the lid weighs just 1.1kg and 'the multi-density, V-shaped impact foam molded directly to the outer shell does not only reduce its volume by 10%, but also transfers up to 20% less rotational forces to the neck, head, and the brain.' Prices start from 259 euros and the designs and colours are also an upgrade on the helmet's initial launch.



Leatt's new **3.5 neck brace** is the lightest in their entire range. At a very reasonable 279 euros the brace uses a semi-rigid EPS constructed chassis with a polymer core and is only adjustable on the rear, compared to the three-way fit of the 5.5 and 6.5 but should still fit the majority of body types. It is always good to properly try the brace with your helmet in the store before deciding which model fit best and works efficiently. When it comes to protection then it always pays to aim for a high level but the 3.5 seems to be an effective compromise in terms of pricing and finding a degree of safety when on the bike. Lastly, a quick word for the carbon-composite **X-Frame** with Leatt taking their knee brace offerings onwards from the single hinge creation. The asymmetrical construction features an inner hinge 40% slimmer than the outer for the best possible contact and feeling with the side of the bike. 499 euros will secure a pair.



www.leatt.com

WorldSBK

PIRELLI SPANISH ROUND

JEREZ · OCTOBER 21-22 · RND 12 OF 13

Race one winner: Jonathan Rea, Kawasaki

Race two winner: Jonathan Rea, Kawasaki



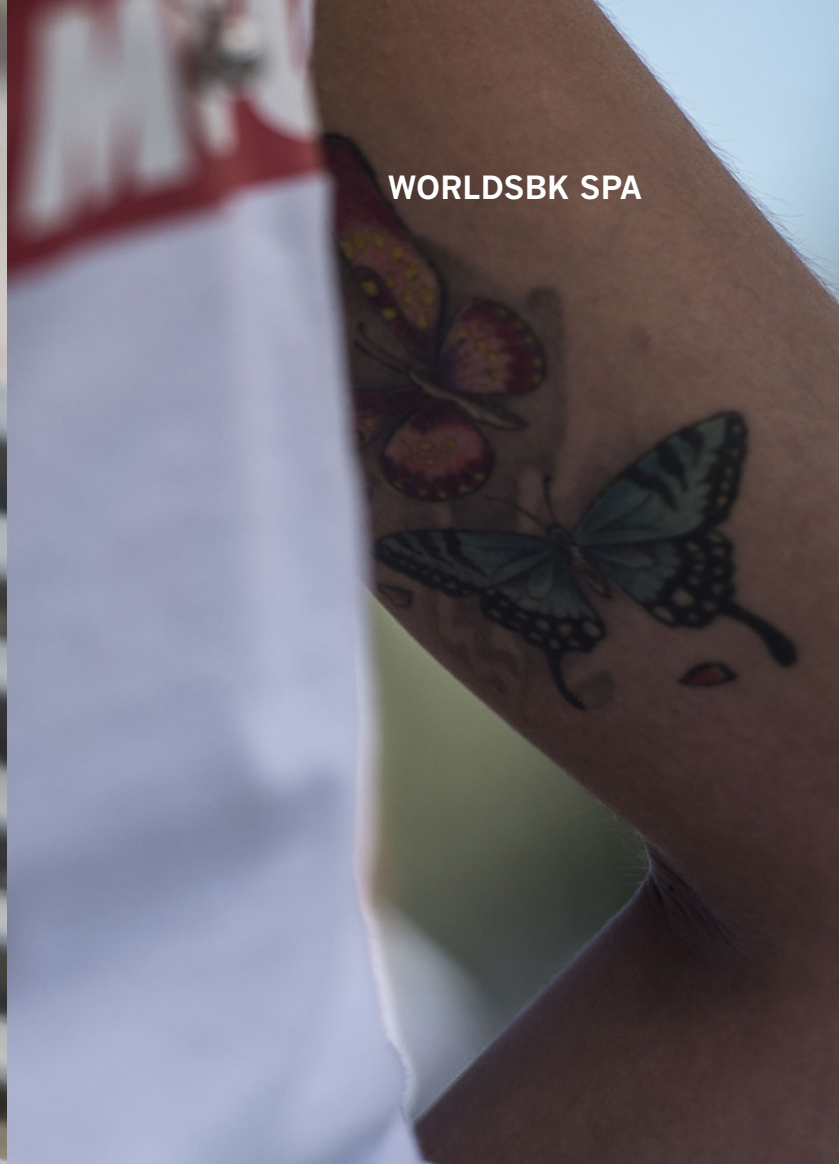
MORE DOUBLES POUR

Gallery & Blog by Graeme Brown/GeeBee images

WORLDSBK SPA







WORLDSBK SPA



LIFE IN THE OLD DOG YET...

It's the time of year that when you wander around the paddock at any race meeting you will find unlikely groups of people having clandestine meetings behind race trucks. You can often guess what is happening when a rider's paddock scooter is parked outside another team's hospitality but no sign of the rider inside having lunch.

It is the same for most of the snappers and journalists who draw their beers from the taps at the Freelancer's Arms. With only one race left in the WorldSBK championship, and as frustratingly normal, no indication of a race calendar for next year, the press room is a hive of activity between people discussing what they know about this race or that race. What hotels have you booked? What's the best airport to fly to for that race? Who will be racing for which team and what work will be available for the next season?

I found myself having several of those hushed chats over the weekend, both with existing clients and other journalists and photographers. I am going to be busy this week putting together some numbers for the dreaded 'B' word. Year on year, the key thing that crops up in all these discussions is "budget".

For race teams it's all about the support they receive from manufacturers; how much they get from sponsors; and of course how much it will cost to compete in the Championship. That last point in itself is not an insignificant amount. In one of my own discussions about photography and media work the subject of the costs to the teams came up and before a wheel is turned a WorldSBK team has to find the best part of 80k per rider. That covers the entry fee, tyres, the cost for Clinica Mobile, amongst other things. Nothing unreasonable but still a fair chunk of money for a two-rider team and that is before the cost of the race machines, race truck, travel and accommodation costs, spare parts: the list goes on.

Over the weekend I did a photoshoot with Anthony West for a Dutch magazine. The focus of

the feature will be all about the nomad lifestyle he has had over the last couple of years. He has become the ultimate journeyman rider. Hopping on and off planes to travel back and forth around the world to race more or less every weekend. In Europe he drives a battered old Mercedes van that has a fair few battlescars and a series of hair-raising stories to match.

I have known Ant since he raced with the Kawasaki MotoGP team and have a lot of time for him. He can be a difficult person to get to know, very far removed from the charismatic, media groomed and polished rider who is everyone's friend. That makes him all the more likeable to me.

In the last couple of years he has sold up everything and gone on the road, racing wherever and whenever he can. Some of

By Graeme Brown



it self-funded, other rides have been paid by teams or individual sponsors. He has ridden Moto2, Supersport and Superbike machinery on all five continents and when we did the photoshoot and had lunch on Thursday I didn't get any indication that he had a desire to stop.

When I look at my own situation, and like the team boss I spoke to, there has to be a time when you have to ask yourself 'is it still worth it?'

For me, as I get older, with a family, a mortgage and all the exciting commitments that comes with the latter, I have to sit down and make a projection of the travel costs for the coming year, look at the amount of work involved with each client, work out how much I personally need/want to earn, throw all that in the blender and come up with a budget for each client. Then ask the question: "is it worth it?" When there is a series of pre-season tests and 13 races to cover, you need an idea where and when they will occur before you can start to plan. However, as I said, it is

a frustratingly common problem with WorldSBK. Will we be heading to Argentina and Thailand next year, and if so when? Crucial things to know to work out flight and hotel costs. If I don't have an idea of things like that it is incredibly difficult to prepare a final budget for the coming season, which incidentally has to be prepared by Friday this week.

The same applies to the team boss I spoke to. He is not sure what he will do next year. Much of it comes down to what budget each rider can bring from personal sponsors to add to his own sponsors input. This year his team competed across two classes which impacts on travel and freight budgets. Quite often journalists I work with laugh that team owners and riders come to them and ask about a calendar for the coming year. Apparently the newshounds in the press office get to hear things about dates and venues before those who might actually compete in the championship. He is busy with his other business at the moment and with a few unknowns at this point he is starting

to ask the question on the validity of competing next year.

Westy had a great result at the weekend riding for Puccetti Racing in the Supersport class, as one of the two replacement riders the team fielded for Kenan Sofuoglu, who is injured, and Kyle Ryde, who has left the team, finishing third in a closely fought race. That cheeky grin appeared on his face and the sparkle was in his eye when I bumped into him on Sunday night and asked about the next race in Qatar. I got the feeling that the taste of Prosecco had temporarily answered the question – yes, it is still worth it.

I also guess like me the other team will be back on the grid in some shape or form. We all have a little bit of race fuel in our veins and a passion running through us that means our day-to-day existence would have a little hole in it if we stayed home. For sure the moment will come when we all are forced to accept that it's time to warm the slippers and make a dent in the sofa, but for now there is life in a few of the old dogs yet.





WORLDSBK SPA







Once again the status as WorldSBK runner-up comes down to Chaz Davies and Tom Sykes with the pair tied on points and just Qatar left to go. Will Rea play another pivotal role?



WORLDSBK SPA



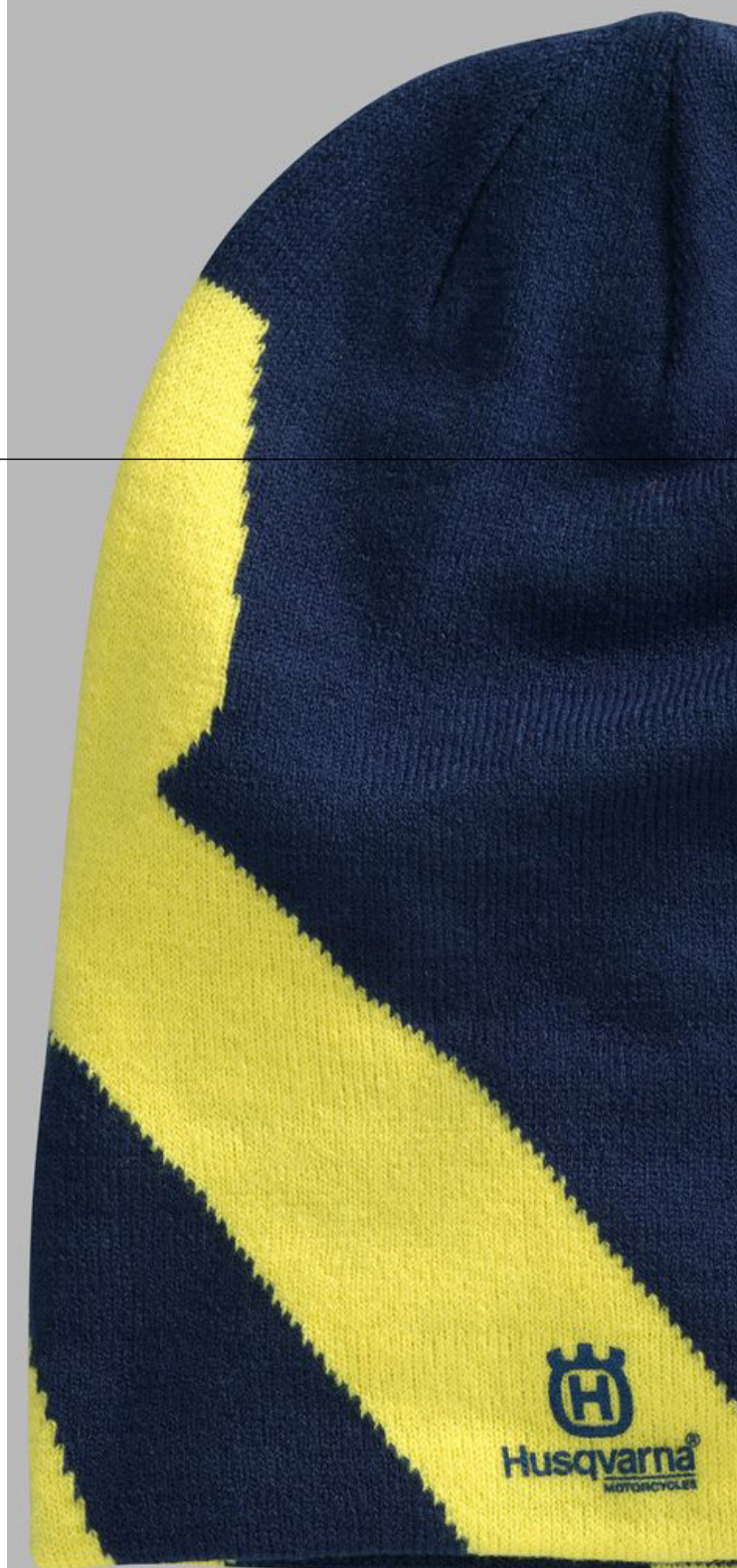


husqvarna

Temperatures are starting to drop as the winter kicks in with some bizarre climate shifts (in Europe at least) so for Husqvarna fans – or those eyeing a smart, motorcycle-related jacket – then the outer layers on offer through the company's website is worth a look. The heavy-duty option is the Sixtorp All-Weather which is essentially a 2-in-1 garment with a detachable warm quilted inner jacket that can be worn separately. On the water-repellent 100% polyester outer shell the hood is detachable, the cuffs are Velcro adjustable and there is a drawcord waistband.

The Sixtorp softshell is a lighter option with an adjustable hood and a mesh look on the shoulders and upper back section as well as elastic inserts under the arms. The hybrid vest could also be something for those chilly first laps on the bike. It is a: 'lightweight, functional vest with stitching from top to under the chest. Lightly padded upper part. Chest pocket with zip and Husqvarna logo. Hidden pockets with zips on the front. Soft, elasticated band at waist and armholes. Lower back pocket.' Don't forget the Husky beanie. Ordering and sizing details can be found through the website.

www.husqvarna-motorcycles.com



▶ SCOTT MX550 HELMET



GET YOUR HEAD IN THE GAME

NO SHORTCUTS

Helmet on, buckle clicked. Now it's just you and the ride ahead. We obsessed every detail, every material and every technology to develop the MX550. Brimming with innovation and shaped by years of experience, this is one of the most advanced high-performance helmets we've ever created. Exceptional comes as a standard. SCOTT helmets, get your head in the game.

SSD
SERIES



ktm

www.ktm.com

KTM are making a big push behind the latest generation of their Freeride E electric mobility concept and the board of directors at Matighofen announced in a special press conference at Hangar 7 on the edge of Salzburg airport that the company will direct even more effort and resources into this sector in the coming years. There was even talk of potential e-bicycle crossover as well as other vehicles such as scooters (KTM displayed a scooter concept project at the Tokyo motorcycle show three years ago). We'll have a report on the Hangar 7 conference in the next issue as KTM continue to expand and drive more numbers into the motorcycle market. For now their second generation **Freeride E-XC** is an off-road model (no current plans

for Supermoto/Street versions) that has been completely reworked. The most obvious area of attention has been battery life and the drive train with the Austrians opting for a Sony cell and engine management system that means a 50% surge of capacity (70% of initial capacity after 700 charge cycles). The bike also recuperates charge when coasting or braking. Advantages of the E-XC are also clear: no emissions, ease-of-use and lightweight, low maintenance and positive ramifications for motorcycling. New WP suspension, better brakes and other tweaks mean that the best selling e-bike on the market has now had a powerful jolt. The 2018 Freeride E-XC will be available in certain markets at the beginning of year.







A NEW KIND OF OLD

Words by Roland Brown,
Photos by Enrico Schiali &
Stefano Gadda



Some say Harley-Davidson's recent flurry of new models is a reaction to the firm's ageing customer base threatening its future; others reckon the main trigger is reborn rival Indian's growing challenge. Whatever the motivation, there's no doubt that Harley has been busy of late. From giant tourers to the entry-level Street, the Milwaukee marque has been releasing new and updated bikes like crazy – and has announced plans for 100 more in the next decade.


Latest models to get the makeover treatment are some of the most important. Eight "Big Twins" are revamped to form a new Softail family, in what Harley is calling the biggest development project in its 115-year history. They include the iconic Fat Boy with its disc wheels; classical Low Rider and Street Bob cruisers; Heritage Classic retro-tourer; and radically low-slung Breakout.

Perhaps most striking of the bunch is the revamped Fat Bob, named after its blend of broad gas tank and cut-down bobber style (now all the rage with rivals including Indian and Triumph launching Bobbers of their own). Previously distinguishable by the pair of round headlights it has worn since its launch in 2008, the Fat Bob gains a new face dominated by a rectangular LED light.

All eight Softails are upgraded with Harley's more powerful and refined Milwaukee-Eight engine, a modified version of the eight-valve V-twin introduced with last year's touring family. The Fat Bob is among the four available with the larger Milwaukee-Eight 114 engine, alongside the regular 107 unit. The figures relate to cubic-inch capacity, signifying an increase from 1745 to 1868cc that boosts torque throughout the rev range.

HARLEY-DAVIDSON FAT BOB



A motorcyclist wearing a black leather jacket and helmet is riding a silver and black Harley-Davidson Fat Bob motorcycle on a paved road that curves to the left. The background features a clear blue sky, distant mountains, and green foliage. The motorcycle's dual exhaust pipes and rear wheel are visible. The text is overlaid in the bottom left corner.

“IN THE FAT BOB’S CASE A BIG PART OF THE IMPROVEMENT IS DOWN TO ITS UPRATED SUSPENSION, WHICH DOES A VERY DECENT JOB OF COMBINING COMFORT AND CORNERING CONTROL...WHEN RIDDEN FORCEFULLY IT CAN BE CRANKED THROUGH TWISTY SECTIONS AT A VERY ENTERTAINING PACE...”

HARLEY-DAVIDSON FAT BOB



All eight models also feature new chassis incorporating lighter, considerably stiffer steel frames and swing-arms (this Fat Bob is a handy 15kg lighter than its predecessor.) They all also have new suspension including dual-bending valve forks, as on the Touring models, and a diagonally mounted rear shock.

Where the Fat Bob differs is that it's the only Softail with steeper, 28-degree rake instead of the 30 degrees of most models. It's also the only one with a beefier front end, featuring upside-down forks, and a twin-disc front brake with four-piston calipers. Its 16-inch cast wheels wear tyres in broad, 150-section front, 180 rear widths.

The Fat Bob has always been a streetfighter with an edgy style, and nothing much has changed there. The new bike retains its predecessor's format of drag bars, relatively tall seat and forward-set footrests, which combine with the tank-mounted instrument panel – and resultantly clean handlebar area – to give a aggressive, snub-nosed look and feel. In its 114ci form the Bob comes with a distinctive “ventilator intake” air filter by its rider's right knee. It pulls crisply off idle, picking up the pace with effortless midrange grunt. The big V-twin unit churns out enjoyably strong force almost regardless of revs, its muted exhaust note the only slight disappointment.

Straight-line performance is certainly up on the outgoing model. Harley claims an advantage of a couple of bike lengths in 0-60mph time, and in top-gear acceleration from there to 80mph, with a similar gain between 107 and 114ci powerplants. That's easy to believe. Harley's engineers put much effort into giving the solidly mounted Milwaukee-Eight engine the right amount of vibration, partly by incorporating an extra balancer shaft to the Touring family unit. Although there's some vibration up towards the 5500rpm limit, the engine's low-rev grunt means you rarely need to go there, and unpleasant vibes just aren't an issue.



Chassis performance is also improbably good; a notable progression from the previous model, thanks mainly to the blend of stiffer frame, more refined suspension and additional ground clearance. Harley says the new frame is 65 per cent stiffer, which gives a 34 per cent increase in overall chassis rigidity.

In the Fat Bob's case a big part of the improvement is down to its uprated suspension, which does a very decent job of combining comfort and cornering control. The fat front tyre means the Harley requires fairly firm counter-steering to change direction, but when ridden forcefully it can be cranked through twisty sections at a very entertaining pace.

It even demonstrates improbably generous amounts of ground clearance when its chunky-patterned Dunlops are made to work hard.



HARLEY-DAVIDSON FAT BOB

The twin front discs allow very sharp braking; a useful advantage over the other Softails and requiring notably less lever pressure for serious stopping.

Like its seven siblings it comes with key-less ignition, modified charging systems and a USB socket under the steering head. Practicality and sophistication have never been big Softail selling points, but a little more of each does no harm, and helps justify the price (£15,845 as tested in the UK; the Fat Bob 107 starts at £14,295).

Whatever the real main motivation for Harley-Davidson's recent burst of product updates, anyone who likes the Fat Bob's new look should be grateful. That square-jawed styling might be its most obvious feature, but this is a comprehensively 'refreshed' Harley that is faster, lighter, sweeter-handling, better braked and more refined than ever.





fly racing

www.flyracing.com

Fly are making a statement with their Neon Pink/Black Lite Hydrogen racewear; arguably some of the best-performing and popular riding products in the motocross gate today. The Lite Hydrogen was the pick of Fly's Supercross and MXGP athletes this year thanks to the strong but airy construction and innovative tweaks such as the Boa System waist fitting dial for optimum comfort. The jersey (49.95 dollars) has a multi panel build, laser cut perforations, open zero-cuff and mesh ventilation. The pants (169.95) have the Boa, multi-direction stretch panels (90%), mesh sections, low profile leg cuffs and a true lightweight aspect.

The Lite glove (21.95) has spandex side-walls and single layer perforated synthetic leather palms for improved airflow and feel. There are also silicone finger grips. The F2 Carbon Rewire (329.95) has a carbon fibre/Kevlar shell and dual density EPS to complete the package. In the midst of Breast Cancer Awareness month the Neon Pink/Black allows riders that want to stand out and highlight an important cause the possibility to go head-to-toe. For more information and images have a quick click on the links..





BACK PAGE

Monster Energy girls
by GeeBee Images







'On-track Off-road' is a free, bi-weekly publication for the screen focussed on bringing the latest perspectives on events, blogs and some of the very finest photography from the three worlds of the FIM Motocross World Championship, the AMA Motocross and Supercross series' and MotoGP. 'On-track Off-road' will be published online at www.ontrackoffroad.com every other Tuesday. To receive an email notification that a new issue available with a brief description of each edition's contents simply enter an address in the box provided on the homepage. All email addresses will be kept strictly confidential and only used for purposes connected with OTOR.

Adam Wheeler Editor and MXGP/MotoGP correspondent

Ray Archer Photographer

Steve Matthes AMA MX and SX correspondent

Cormac Ryan-Meenan MotoGP Photographer www.cormacgp.com

Simon Cudby AMA SX/MX Photographer

Matthew Roberts Television Presenter and WSB correspondent

Gavin Emmett TV commentator/Presenter and MotoGP Reporter

David Emmett MotoGP Blogger

Neil Morrison MotoGP Blogger

Graeme Brown WSB Blogger and Photographer

Roland Brown Tester

Núria Garcia Cover Design

Rosa Baldrich 2017 re-design

Gabi Álvarez Web developer

Hosting FireThumb7 - www.firethumb7.co.uk

Thanks to www.mototribu.com

PHOTO CREDITS

Ray Archer, CormacGP/Sienna Wades, GeeBee Images,

Cover shot: Marvin Musquin by Simon Cudby

This publication took a lot of time and effort to put together so please respect it! Nothing in this publication can be reproduced in whole or part without the written permission of the editorial team. For more information please visit www.ontrackoffroad.com and click 'Contact us'.